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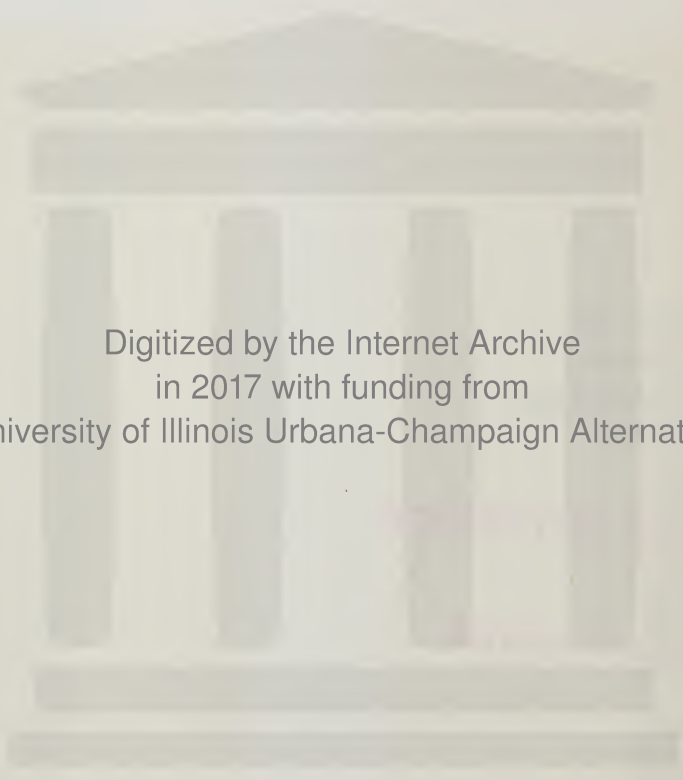
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THE PIERPONT MORGAN MANUSCRIPTS.

A Survey of the Most Wonderful Collection of Autograph Literature
Ever Exhibited in America, Now on View at Colum-
bia University—An Amazing Array.

By GEORGE S. HELLMAN, M. A.



HILE the manuscripts now displayed in the Columbia University Library constitute but a small part of Mr.

J. Pierpont Morgan's autograph collection, they are sufficient to form an exhibit such as the New York public has never before been privileged to see. The authorities at Columbia, and especially Prof. Simkhovitch, have good reason to be gratified at the distinction of having such treasures displayed in their library, and a decided debt of gratitude is due to Mr. Morgan, whose characteristic reticence and dislike of publicity concerning his private possessions make all the more appreciated his loan of these wonderful volumes.

The adjective "wonderful" seems especially appropriate in connection with the unique objects in this exhibit. Of all the things that are sought after by collectors—paintings, books, engravings, coins, ivories, wines, rare plants, &c.—there is none where the appeal to the imagination is so direct and so broad in its scope as in the case of literary and historical manuscripts. In everything else the sensuous element plays some part, greater or lesser; color, form, odor, taste—one or more of these being qualities that join in with or form a constituent part of that rarity which is a distinct element of the collector's delight. Not so with manuscripts. Paper per se has inconsiderable beauty, and the character of the handwriting itself is of objective interest only in so far as it indicates the character of the author. And yet the manuscript of a famous book, or the autographic record of an important historical event, has the power of translating the observer into a realm where greatness holds the centre of the stage, and where all the human emotions figure.

Consider, for instance, this small book, which is the first to attract the attention of the visitor on entering the Exhibit Room. The Bible, and Shakespeare—what, besides these, has more profoundly left its impress on the English-speaking race, more widely affected the English tongue, than "Paradise Lost"? And here we have the epic in its first visible form, the immediate translation into the symbols of language of the conception brought forth by the poet's mind. We evoke the picture of Milton in his blindness dictating these lines which have resounded throughout the world, ennobling the thoughts and the characters of myriad men. To the imaginative mind this ceases to be a mere book, and becomes the epitome of an age, the symbol of the divinest attributes of universal man.

Not far away, in another glass case, lies the manuscript of Keats's "Endymion." We see, as he wrote it, the immortal line, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." When creeds crumble in the course of intellectual evolution, when doubt and pessimism assert themselves in individual life, these inspired words still remain as irrefutable solace throughout our earthly journey. Beauty is pereennial, and all the miseries of existence cannot obliterate it. In literature Keats is its high priest, and the main tenet of his lovely faith is embodied in this page which, though mute, has awakened a thousand echoes in the heart of man. And fitting it is that near by should rest a manuscript of Thomas Chatterton, another marvelous boy, who also died in youth, leaving the world his debtor.

Next to various manuscripts of Keats is Shelley's Note Book, containing numerous pages written, presumably, when he was a student at Cambridge. The skeptical contents of these angular lines contain in germ the thoughts which

form the basis of his "Queen Mab," and recall the episode that led to his expulsion from the University and his launching forth upon the sea of radicalism. Shelley the agnostic, the free thinker, the lover of liberty and opponent of all oppression, stands forth, in these pages, on the verge of the battle of life, where he was to prove himself not, as Matthew Arnold calls him,

an "ineffectual angel," but a Tyrtæus, whose inspiration still endures.

Near Shelley and Keats one naturally looks for Byron. Here, as selections from a collection of Byron manuscripts which is the finest in existence, are, in the poet's hand, "Don Juan," "The Corsair," and "Marino Faliero"; the quiet dignity of the last named tragedy in effective contrast to the vulgarity which marks many portions of the famous narrative poem—but everywhere the stamp of genius. The Byron manuscripts contain many corrections by the author and offer much interesting study to the scholarly investigator.

From this point of view perhaps the most interesting of all the items here exhibited is Pope's "Essay on Man." Probably the best known couplet in this best known of Pope's writings is the one which in Mr. Morgan's manuscript runs first as follows:

Learn then Thyself, not God presume
to scan,
And know the study of mankind is
man.

Pope then changes in the first line the words "then Thyself" to "we ourselves," and in the second, the word "And" to "But." Before the poem appeared in print Pope had varied the second line so that (unless memory serves false) it should read:

"The rightful science of mankind
is man."

Then, in his own copy of the first edition, Pope made further autographic corrections, changing the line to

"The proper study of mankind
is man,"

in which form the verse now stands, ære perennius. Pope, in this poem, as throughout his writings, followed the counsel given by Boileau. "Etudiez la cour et connaissez la ville" was the Frenchman's advice as to subject matter, and regarding style he laid down the canon that every line should be

hammered out to the last degree of perfection on the anvil of thought.

While, then, we have in Pope the ultimate expression of eighteenth century reflection on man on the more restricted side—man in the city—man at court—the democratic movement, which is the prime element in the development of eighteenth century literature, and which has as its leitmotif man himself, whether in the fields or elsewhere, is in some ways best exemplified by the poetry of Burns. "A man's a man for a' that" is the bugle note in the new battle in which Burns was the lyric protagonist. The manuscripts of the poem containing this verse, and of all the other songs of Burns, which are as familiar as the Ten Commandments—"Auld Lang Syne," "Mary Morrison, 'Comin' Thro' the Rye"—were sent by the poet to his friend Thomson, and are, together with the letters of Burns, in Mr. Morgan's collection; and so are "Tam o' Shanter" and "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and those wonderful epistles to Mrs. Dunlop.

Once more we are carried back to the eighteenth century, for here is the manuscript of a poem written by Swift, describing Stella at Wood Park. The usually biting wit of the old Dean is tempered by his affection for the one woman he ever loved. Next is the manuscript of one of Dryden's plays, followed by a paper on Italy written by Addison. And here is old Samuel Johnson's "Life of Pope," not far from a comedy of his good friend Oliver Goldsmith. How the spirit of Boswell must rejoice at this reunion of his heroes!

The collection of Scott manuscripts almost takes away one's breath. "Waverley," "Ivanhoe," "The Monastery," "Anne of Geierstein," "Old Mortality," "Guy Mannering," "Tales of a Grandfather," all these favorites of youth and older folks who have not lost their liking for the flavor of romance, are here, with "The Lady of the Lake" and Scott's own Journal. By this time the visitor realizes that along its own lines Mr. Morgan's collections outruns the rivalry of even the British Museum. And here, in the author's handwriting is "Vanity Fair"! We wonder whether it is only by chance that the page revealed under the glass is that which



contains the description of William Dobbin at school, where "high and low, all made fun of him"—the good, unselfish, simple-natured man who, as we know, is the true hero in the great work to which Thackeray, with silent humor and in a spirit of gentle satire, gave the sub-title of "A Novel Without a Hero." Do you care for Dickens more than Thackeray? Well then, for you behold displayed the manuscript of "The Christmas Carol," the most exquisite and tenderly drawn of all of the pictures that the great master painted on the canvas of life. Next to it are the manuscripts of "The Holiday Romance," "Hunted Down," "Sketches of Young Gentlemen," and "The Battle of Life."

Practically all the famous English authors of the nineteenth century figure in the exhibit. George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, Ruskin, with "The Stones of Venice"; Charles Reade, with "Hard Cash" and "Love Me Little, Love Me Long"; Carlyle, William Morris, the two Brontës, Charlotte, with "The Professor"; Macaulay, Stevenson, Disraeli, Swinburne, Marryat with "Midshipman Easy," Wilkie Collins with his "Moonstone" and "The Woman in White," and Bulwer Lytton with "The Last Days of Pompeii" and "Harold." What an astounding array of manuscripts of works that have aroused the pleasure and beguiled the imagination of countless readers!

Nor is the collection of American literature one that can be passed by without interest and wonder. The delightful Holmes offers "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," and the melodious genius of ill-starred Poe contributes "The Bells." Longfellow and Whitman bring fruits of their muse, and from Whittier we have an unpublished poem entitled "Vathek" and the manuscript of "The Question," printed in his works under the title of "Questions of Life," one of the finest of his poems. Lowell presents in his autograph the record of "A Year's Life." It might be wished that Thoreau and Emerson were in-

cluded in this galaxy, so to round out the group of New England authors; and Mr. Morgan has some very fine Emerson manuscripts, both published and unpublished. But it would be ungracious to cavil at a selection which has presented to us such great American works as those already mentioned, and to which are added Cooper's "Deerslayer", Irving's "Conquest of Granada", two Western stories by Bret Harte, Fiske's "Destiny of Man" and "Through Nature to God", and Hawthorne's "The Ghost of Dr. Har- ris."

The last-named tale is little known to the general public, but it has certain points of special interest to the student of Hawthorne. During the last years of his life his mind revolved almost incessantly around two themes which, in one way or another, found expression in all the writings of his declining years. The one idea is that of some elixir of life that should confer earthly immortality upon its possessor. In "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret" and "The Dolliver Romance" this theme forms the basis of the plot. The other idea was that of the mystery of an ancient crime, manifesting itself in the print of a bloody footstep, and still bearing fruit long years after its commission. In "Septimius Felton" and the incomplete tale entitled "The Ancestral Footstep" this theme is elaborated. That both ideas which he sought to interweave contain the possibility of a large spiritual and moral application is patent, but how best to use his material was a source of much worrisome reflection to Hawthorne, who, indeed, in this work, did not rise to the height of his own expectations. With these writings that disappointed their author, but which offer so much for interesting study, Mr. Morgan's manuscript is associated.

And here, indeed, is a fitting place to remind those who intend to visit Mr. Morgan's collection of Hawthorne's paper entitled "A Book of Autographs," wherein the most beautifully imaginative of American authors gives, in his description of some letters of



Washington, Franklin, Adams, and others, expression concerning the suggestive power of original manuscripts. "They are," he writes, "magic scrolls, if read in the right spirit. The roll of the drum and fanfare of the trumpet is latent in some of them; and in others an echo of the oratory that resounded in the old halls of the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia; or the words may come to us as with the living utterance of one of those illustrious men, speaking face to face, in friendly communion. Strange, that the mere identity of paper and ink should be so powerful.

So, in the exhibit at Columbia, we shall find autographs of Washington, to evoke memories of the Revolution, and of Lincoln, to recall the critical events of the civil war.

The most striking Lincoln manuscript, however, is of literary and autobiographical, rather than of historical, interest. Lincoln, the statesman, the lawyer, the man, the Commander in Chief, is familiar to us; but Lincoln as poet is a novel figure. Yet here we have a lengthy original description in verse of a bear hunt in which the youthful Lincoln took part. Despite its metrical shortcomings, the poem has the merit of picturesqueness, and runs along with much swiftness of action. The concluding stanzas of this unpublished rarity reveal that insight into human character and that sense of humor which were so integral a part of Lincoln's greatness, and which, displaying themselves in his conversation, enabled him so surprisingly well to point a moral by the tale his wit adorned.

Other famous personages in history represented in the exhibit include Cromwell, who writes to his wife a letter finely making evident his brave Puritanic character; William Penn, and Martha Washington, whose last Wills and Testaments are here; Cornwallis, with the very proposal for the surrender at Yorktown which ended the war between England and America, and Mary, Queen of Scots, whose letter to the Duke de Guise gives rise to recollections of the romantic career of the Princess who has appealed, be-

yond all other women, to the imagination of poets, and around whose life there clusters so vast an amount of literature. The Duke de Guise was one of the chief characters to figure in the political intrigues by which Mary continually sought to regain her lost power, and it was to him that she addressed one of her last letters, to apprise him of her condemnation to that death which brought to an end the unhappy adventures of a woman who, for all her vices and frailties, was yet, in high intelligence, in noble courage, and in unflagging will, a worthy daughter, wife, and mother of kings.

We may turn, if we wish, from this magnificent creature of a dissolute French Court to the contemplation of moral and religious manuscripts of two of the greatest ecclesiastics whose oratory affected the life of France, for here are Bossuet's "Sur la Satisfaction de Jésus-Christ" and Fénelon's "La Philosophie Morale ou Ethique" in the same case with sermons and letters of Laurence Sterne, and the Psalms of David translated into English verse by John Keble. Later French literature is further represented by Voltaire's "Pucelle d'Orléans" and his remarkable essay on "Theism"; by the "Chansons" of Beranger, Dumas' "Three Musketeers," and important manuscripts of Mme. de Staël, Zola, and many others. The Dumas manuscript once more carries us into the realm of adventure where no deed seems too daring for bravery to accomplish on behalf of love and beauty.

Such, then, are a few suggestions concerning the interest of this exhibit. There has been no attempt to mention every item displayed; while the discussion of many points of technical interest to autograph collectors has been avoided as apart from the general purpose of this paper. It has been written with the desire of bringing to the attention of the public at large the golden opportunity which now is offered at Columbia. Every visitor, we fancy, will find special manuscripts to arouse his delight, each according to the trend of his literary tastes. Milton, Keats, Thackeray, Dickens—all have their own votaries and acolytes. But, however differing in their enthusiasms, there will be few to leave this exhibit without some consciousness of civic pride at the thought that these volumes, symbolizing the truest wealth, the finest inspiration of many lands and many centuries, gathered together by a very representative American, and forming a noble company more regal than kings, are fittingly treasured in the heart of our city.

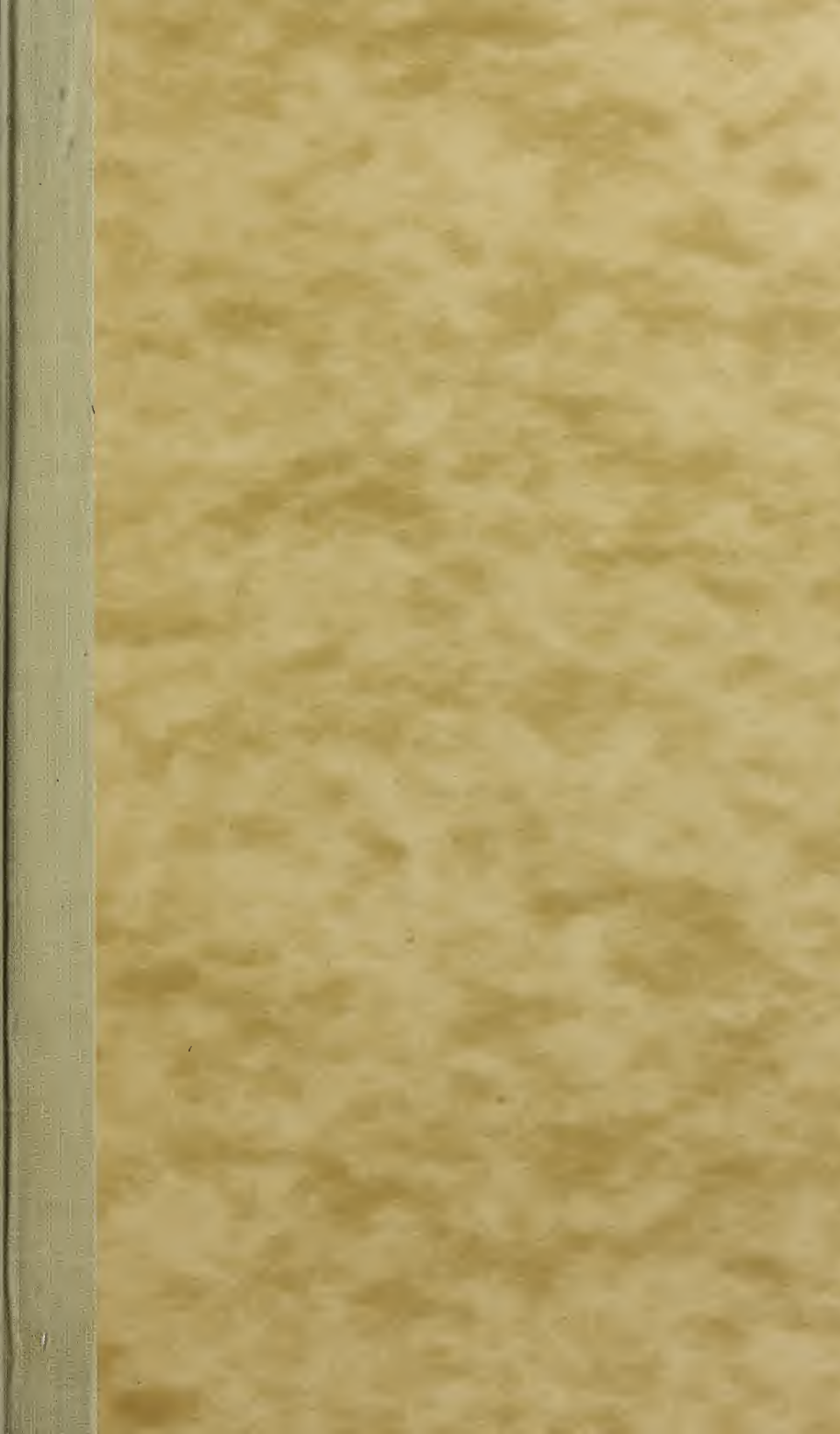
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